

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

**Thursday, 29th August, 2024**

**Present:** Cllr Mrs M Tatton (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Banks, Cllr P M Hickmott, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr A McDermott (substitute), Cllr K B Tanner (substitute) and Cllr C J Williams (substitute).

Together with representatives of Aylesford, Birling, Borough Green (Vice-Chair – Cllr S Butterfill), Ditton, East Malling and Larkfield, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham, Kings Hill, Platt, Plaxtol, Shipbourne, Watringbury, West Malling and Wrotham Parish Councils; and County Cllrs S Hudson and H Rayner.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R W Dalton (Chair), R P Betts, M D Boughton, P Boxall, M A Coffin and S M Hammond and Burham, East Peckham and Wouldham Parish Councils.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

#### **PPP 24/10 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Councillor A McDermott substituted for Councillor R Dalton (Chair)
- Councillor K Tanner substituted for Councillor R Betts
- Councillor C Williams substituted for Councillor M Boughton

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

#### **PPP 24/11 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **PPP 24/12 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no matters required to be updated.

#### **PPP 24/13 S106 CONTRIBUTIONS - ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT**

The report of the Senior Development Obligations Officer provided a summary of the S106 developers' contributions received by the Council since the beginning of calendar year 2024.

It was noted that the majority of the contributions would be reported within the Infrastructure Funding Statement for the 2023/24 reporting period, which was anticipated to be presented to the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee later in the year.

Members and Parish/Town Council representatives were advised that whilst liaisons were ongoing with relevant parties in respect of the allocation of the funds to projects, any specific queries should be directed to the Senior Development Obligations Officer via email.

### **PPP 24/14 JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE - CONFIRMATION OF REPRESENTATIVES AND VOTING ALLOCATIONS**

Consideration was given to a referral from the Joint Standards Committee of 5 June 2024 to note the Parish/Town Council representatives and voting allocations agreed for the period 2024/26.

The Panel agreed to note:

- (1) the revised 'pool' for parish and town council representatives, as set out in Annex 1 to the report for the Joint Standards Committee of 5 June 2024; and
- (2) the voting allocations for 2024-26, as set out in the aforesaid Annex 1 and duplicated below:

2024/25	Burham, Ditton, Hadlow, Platt, Plaxtol and Ryarsh;
2025/26	Addington, Aylesford, Borough Green, East Peckham, Kings Hill and Trottiscliffe;
2026/27	Snodland, Wrotham and 4 vacancies

### **PPP 24/15 OVERVIEW OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT**

In response to a query raised by the Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) (Cllr S Barker) in respect of the Borough Council's Planning Enforcement team and how they planned to tackle outstanding case backlogs, the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr M Taylor) drew Members' attention to the recruitment and retention challenge in Planning Services faced by many local authorities in the South East of England and the positive measures the Borough Council had put in place to address this significant issue.

The Vice Chair of Kent County Council Planning Applications Committee (Cllr H Rayner) expressed his support in facilitating collaboration opportunities between the County Council and the Borough Council in terms of sharing Planning enforcement resource and the general idea of collaboration at county and borough levels was welcomed by the Chief

Executive and the Cabinet Member for Planning and considered worthy of further exploration.

It was therefore suggested by the Vice Chair of the Panel (Cllr S Butterfill of Borough Green Parish Council) and supported by the Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) that a meeting be arranged between the Chief Executive, the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Vice Chair of Kent County Council Planning Applications Committee to identify joint working opportunities and that the outcome of the meeting be reported back to this Panel in due course.

Finally, the Chair reminded all parish/town councils to raise concerns on any specific enforcement cases directly with Planning officers or local borough councillors.

## **PPP 24/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(1) Local Plan**

In response to a question raised by Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) and Kings Hill Parish Council in respect of the emerging Local Plan and impact of the ongoing government consultation on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system, the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr M Taylor) and the Chief Executive provided a brief update on the Borough Council's Local Plan process.

Members noted that the implications of the proposed reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the planning system for the Borough Council were anticipated to be reported to the next meeting of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee on 24 September 2024, with a further report planned for the Committee on 3 December 2024.

During discussion, significant mutual concern was raised by the Chief Executive, the Cabinet Member for Planning and representatives of the parish/town councils over the massive uplift of 29% in yearly housing need requirement placed on the Borough, with an additional 20% buffer given that the Borough Council did not currently have a 5-year housing land supply.

Whilst the Borough Council submitted its own consultation response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the County Council and all parish/town councils were encouraged to respond to the government consultation, either individually or collectively. The consultation could be accessed on the website at [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system) and would close on 24 September 2024.

Furthermore, reference was made to developments in areas where there was lack of utility infrastructures, although it was acknowledged that implementation and expansion of infrastructures would likely need to be justified by the growth of population, particularly in the case of investment by the private sectors.

Finally, Members acknowledged the benefit of adopting a Local Plan as soon as practically possible in order to address challenges brought forward by the speculative development schemes whilst appreciating that the burden of meeting the growing housing need would have to be shared across the Borough on an as fair and equitable as possible basis. With regard to a new timetable for the Local Plan, the Chief Executive advised that the Borough Council would be in a position to consider a proposed new timetable as soon as a final proposal around the reform of the planning system was published by the Government following the conclusion of the ongoing consultation.

In addition, a question was raised by a Parish Council representative in respect of enforcement of carbon reduction target for new build housing and this would be forwarded to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health for a response to be provided either outside of the meeting or at a future meeting.

## **(2) Thermal Imaging Camera Loan Scheme**

The Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) and the Chief Executive provided a brief introduction of the above scheme, which would be launched by the Borough Council in September 2024 to help support residents to improve insulation, comfort and save energy at home. A note provided by the Climate Change Officer to update the Panel Members on the launch of the Scheme was attached to the Minutes at Annex 1.

## **(3) Climate Action Shipbourne and Plaxtol Presentation and Workshop**

The Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) informed the Panel of a presentation and workshop on the climate change agenda – ‘Our Burning Issue!’ to be held at Plaxtol Memorial Hall on 14 September 2024. A leaflet of the event was attached to the Minutes at Annex 2.

## **(4) West Kent Rural Grants Funding**

The Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) encouraged parish/town councils to consider applying to the above grants scheme for funding to support capital projects of local communities. Details of the funding were available on the website at [West Kent Rural Grants | Sevenoaks District Council](#).

**(5) Kent County Council Updates**

County Councillor H Rayner provided the Panel with a brief update on a number of issues with implications for the borough:

- Housing and infrastructure – as discussed earlier on the agenda;
- Review of road projects – cuts and delay to projects, with particular reference made to the Lower Thames Crossing and associated road network works;
- Transport and buses – uncertainty around continued funding to support improvement of service and routes;
- Tax education – concern on VAT addition to the fees of private schools and impact on public schools;
- Adult social care – fast growing pressure on the County Council due to increasing demands;
- New EU Entry/Exit System – potential significant delays to be anticipated at UK borders, including Dover, Folkstone and St Pancras, from mid-November; and
- Asylum seeking children – County Council continued to put pressure on the Home Office in respect of the implementation of the national transfer scheme in response to the high number of arrivals.

The meeting ended at 8.41 pm